



National Medal of Arts

Created by Congress in 1984, the National Medal of Arts is conferred by the White House to honor persons and organizations who have made extraordinary contributions to the excellence, support, growth, and availability of the arts in the United States. The National Endowment for the Arts solicits nominations for the award, which are vetted by the National Council on the Arts and then forwarded to the President for final selection. The awards, which are non-monetary, are presented each year at a special White House ceremony.



The National Medal of Arts, designed by internationally renowned sculptor Robert Graham. NEA photo.



President Bill Clinton and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton with National Medal of Arts winner Gwen Verdon. Photo by Neshan H. Naltchayan.

During the November 5, 1998 ceremony honoring the year's National Medal of Arts winners, President Clinton asked the 32 "alumni" of Steppenwolf Theatre who were in the audience to stand and be recognized. The fact that John Malkovich, Laurie Metcalf, Gary Sinese, Martha Plimpton and Jeff Perry were among them demonstrates the significance of this nonprofit theater, a 1998 Medalist. The complete list of National Medalists for 1998 reads:

Jacques d'Amboise

New York, NY
Dancer, Choreographer and
Dance Educator

Antoine "Fats" Domino

New Orleans, LA
Rock and Roll Pianist and Singer

"Ramblin'" Jack Elliott

Marshall, CA
Folk Singer and Songwriter

Frank Gehry

Santa Monica, CA
Architect

Barbara Handman

New York, NY
Arts Advocate

Agnes Martin

Taos, NM
Visual Artist

Gregory Peck

Los Angeles, CA
Actor and Producer

Roberta Peters

Scarsdale, NY
Opera Singer

Philip Roth

Cornwall Bridge, CT
Writer

Sara Lee Corporation

Chicago, IL
Arts Patron

Steppenwolf Theatre Company

Chicago, IL
Arts Organization

Gwen Verdon

Bronxville, NY
Actress and Dancer

